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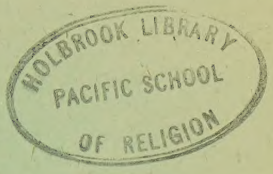

India Cultures Quarterly

1961 QUARTER TWO

The India Cultures Quarterly

Editor : Dr. R. D. Immanuel
Leonard Theological College
Jabalpur

Vol. 19 | Second Quarter 1961 | No. 2

CONTENTS.

		Page
1.	THE HINDU IDEA OF INCARNATION. *Mathen Varghese, B. Sc*	1
2.	SHIVA & VISHNU FESTIVALS. *Dr. R. D. Immanuel, M. A., Th. D.*	7
3.	THE MID-INDIA REGION. *Dr H. H Presler, S. T. B.; Ph. D.*	14
4.	TIRUKURAL (A NEW TRANSLATION). *Dr. R. D Immanuel, M. A ; Th. D.*	21
5.	BOOK REVIEW.	26
6.	THE PROBLEM OF LIFE IN BUDDHISM. *A. P. Salve B. A.*	28

THE INDIA CULTURES QUARTERLY

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No. 19 **SECOND QUARTER 1961** **No. 2**

The Hindu Idea of Incarnation

The Ten Avataras

The tenet of incarnation (avatara) is a fundamental one in the mediaeval and modern Hindu religion as taught in the Puranas and similar works; it is so especially with the Visnuites, the greater number of whom worship either Rama or Krishna, the two last incarnations of Vishnu, not that god in his original form; the reverse holds good with Siva, who is adored as such, or under one of his various forms which cannot be properly called incarnations. We must, therefore, examine the incarnations of Visnu in order to comprehend the nature of incarnation as conceived in India, and to form an idea concerning the origin and development of the complex body of beliefs on the subject.

In the Maha-bharata Vishnu has become the most prominent of the gods, and some of his incarnations are more or less distinctly noticed; but it is in the puranas that they receive their full development. According to the generally received account, the incarnations of Vishnu are ten in number, each of them being assumed by Vishnu, the great preserving power, to save the world from some great danger or trouble.

They are :—

1 Matsya. 2. Kurma 3. Varaha. 4. Nara-sinha. 5. Vamana. 6. Parasu-rama. 7. Rama 8. Krishna. 9. Buddha. 10. Kalki.

Let us deal with these Avataras one by one in detail.

1. Matsya

This word means 'fish'. This is an appropriation to Vishnu of the ancient legend of the fish and the deluge, as reiated in the Satapatha-Brahmana. The details of this avatara vary slightly in differeht Puranas. The object of the incarnation was to save Vaivaswata, the seventh Manu, and progenitor of the human race, from destruction by a deluge. A small fish came into the hands of Manu and besought his protection. He carefully guarded it, and it grew rapidly until nothing but the ocean could contain it. Manu then recognised its divinity, and worshipped the deity Vishnu, thus incarnate. The god apprised Manu of the approaching cataclysm, and bade him prepare for it. When lt came, Manu embarked in a ship with the Rishis, and with the seeds of all existing things. Vishnu then appeared as the fish with a most stupendous horn. The ship was bound to its horn with the great Serpent as with a rope, and was secured in safety until the waters had subsided. The Bhagavata Purana introduces a new feature. In one of the nights of Brahma and during his repose, the earth and the other worlds were submerged in the ocean. Then the demon Haya-griva drew near, and carried off the Veda which had issued from Brahma's mouth. To recover the Veda thus lost, Vishnu assumed the form of a fish, and saved Manu as above related. But this Purana adds, that the fish instructed Manu and the Rishis in "the true doctrine of the soul of the eternal Brahma;" and, when Brahma awoke at the end of this dissolution of the universe, Vishnu slew Haya-griva and restored the Veda to Brahma. Thus the purpose was achieved.

2. Kurma

Kurma means 'the tortoise'. The germ of this Avatara is foud in the Satapatha Brahmana. as above noticed. In its later and developed form, Vishnu appeared in the form of a tortoise in the Satya-yuga, or first age, to recover some things of value which had been lost in the deluge. In the form of a tortoise he placed himself at the bottom of the sea of milk, and made his back the base or pivot of the mountain Mandara. The gods and demons twisted the great serpent Vasuki round the

mountain, and dividing into two parties, each took an end of the snake as a rope, and thus churned the sea until they recovered the desired objects.

These objects were :

(1) *Amrita*, the water of life; (2) *Dhanwantri*, the physician of the gods and bearer of the cup of Amrita; (3) *Lakshmi* goddess of fortune and beauty, and consort of Vishnu; (4) *Sura* goddess of wine; (5) *Chandra* the moon, (6) *Rambha*, a nymph, and pattern of a lovely and amiable woman; (7) *Uchchaisravas* a wonderful and model horse; (8) *Kaustubha*, a celebrated jewel; (9) *Parijata*, a celestial tree (10) *Surabhi*, the cow of plenty; (11) *Airavata*, a wonderful model elephant; (12) *Sankha* a shell, the conch of victory (13) *Dhanus*, a famous bow; and (14) *Visha*, poison.

3. Varaha

Varaha means ' the boar '. The old legend of the Brahmanas concerning the boar which raised the earth from the waters has been appropriated to Vishnu. A demon named Hiranyaksha had dragged the earth to the bottom of the sea. To recover it Vishnu assumed the form of a boar, and after a contest of a thousand years slew the demon and raised up the earth.

4. Nara-sinha

Nara-sinha means ' the man lion '. Vishnu assumed this form to deliver the world from the tyranny of Hiranuakasipu, a demon who, by the favour of Brahma, had become invulnerable, and was secure from gods, men, animals. This demon's son, named Prahlada, worshipped Vishnu, which so incensed his father that he tried to kill him, but his efforts were all in vain. Contending with his son as to the omnipotence and omnipresence of Vishnu, Hiranya-kasipu demanded to know if Vishnu was present in a stone pillar of the hall, and struck it violently. To avenge Prahalada. and to vindicate his own offended majesty, Vishnu came forth from the pillar as the Nara-sinha, half-man and half-lion, and tore arrogant king Daitya to pieces.

(The above said incarnations are supposed to have appeared in the satya-yuga, or first age of the world.)

5 Vamana

Vamana means ' The dwarf '. In the Treta-yuga, or second age, the Daitya king Bali had, by his devotions and austerities, acquired the dominion of the three worlds, and the gods wers shorn of their power and dignity. To remedy this, Vishnu was born as a diminutive son of Kasyapa and Aditi. The dwarf appeared before Bali, and begged of him as much land as he could step over in three paces. The generous monarch complied with the request; Vishnu took two strides over heaven and earth; but respecting the virtues of Bali, he then stopped, leaving the dominion of Patala, or the infernal regions, to Bali.

(These first five incarnations are thus purely mythological; but the next three are heroic, and the ninth, religious.

6. Parasu-rama

Parasu-rama means, 'Rama with the axe'. He was the first Rama and the sixth avatara of Vishnu. He was a Brahman, the fifth son of Jamad-agni and Renuka. He became manifest in the world at the beginning of the Tretayuga, for the purpose of repressing the tyranny of the Kshatrya or regal caste. He is said to have cleared the earth of the Kshatriyas twentyone times, to have given the earth to the Brahmans. He is said to have brought Brahmans into his country from the north, and to have bestowed the land upon them in expiation of the slaughter of the Kashtryas.

7. Rama or Rama-chandra

Rama-chandra means 'the moon-like or gentle Rama, the hero of the Ramayana. He was the son of Dasaratha, the king of Ayodhya, of the Solar race, and was born in the Treta-yuga, or second age, for the purpose of destroying the demon, Ravana.

8. Krishna

Krishna means, 'The black or dark coloured'. He is the most popular of all the later deities, and has obtained such pre-

eminence, that his votaries look upon him not simply as an incarnation, but as a perfect manifestation of Vishnu. When Krishna is thus exalted to the full godhead, his elder brother, Bala-rama, takes his place as the eighth Avatara.

9. Bnddha

It is believed that Vishnu has appeared as Buddha to encourage demons and wicked men to despise the Vedas, reject caste, and deny the existence of the gods, and thus to effect their own desrtuction. The great success of Buddha as a religious teacher seems to have induced the Brahmans to adopt him as their own, rather than to recognise him as an adversary.

10. Kalki or Kalkin

Kalki means 'the white horse'. This incarnation of Vishnu is to appear at the end of the **Kali** or **Iron Age**, seated on a white horse, with a drawn sword blazing like a comet, for the final destruction of the wicked, the renovation of creation, and the restoration of purity.

Important Points to be Noted

1 Incarnation or descent happened not only in human form but in animal form and also in mixed form.

2. Two incarnations of the same person during the same period happened, i.e. Rama & Krishna avataras.

3. In order to vindicate honour and power, Vishnu assumed the form suited to the situation and the method he liked.

Purpose of Avatars

The purpose of avatars is mentioned above in the case of each one of them. Still it is good to deal with the object of the Avataras in general.

Though it is sometimes said that the purpose of the avatara is the destruction of evil doers, the so-called destruction is only a poetical and allegorical discription of the destruction of their

wickedness by puryfying their minds for the purpose of redeeming them

The real object of the avatara is therefore only to protect all by placing before them an adorable object where in the glories of god are fully manifested and to which worship can be offered spontaneously.

Avatara is the entry of divine love into cosmic history in its critical moral situations in order to arrest the progress of sin. Overpowered by mercy and tenderness, god realizes his godliness by saving the sinner and seeking the saint. The idea of Avatara does not imply any kind of limitation or self-limitations. It shows the infinitive creative power of Love.

Shaivaite and Vaishnavaite Festivals

Dr. R.D. Immanuel M.A., Th.D.

Most of the Hindus in South India are either Shaivaites or Vaishnavaites. Hence, the festivals observed by them have more than a sectarian importance. Moreover it is usual to classify Hindu festivals under three heads, namely (a) festivals connected with the movements of sun and moon, (b) festivals arising from animistic sources, and (c) sectarian festivals. But these festivals while predominantly sectarian by nature, are connected with the movements of the sun and moon and have certain practices which make one suspect animistic connections.

Vishnu is the god of incarnations, while Shiva is the god of manifestation. Hence the festivals of the former are connected with the ten avatars the ones of the latter are not.

a. Shaivaite Festivals

Maha Shiva Ratri : These words mean the night of the great Shiva. This falls on the thirteenth day of waning moon in the month of Magha (February-March). In order to keep the festival properly, a full day fast must be observed. Morever at every watch (a three-hours period called jama) the symbol of Shiva must be worshipped with offerings Kondrai flowers, bel leavess. It must also be bathed in Ghee, honey, curds, milk. Early next morning the worshippers take what is known as oil-bath, by smearing themselves with gingeley oil and bathing in cold water. Then they recite the various names of Shiva and offer him one hundred and eight bel leaves. Neither the previous night, nor the the next day till the sun sets and it is quite dark should they sleep. In modern times this is made easy, because on Shiva Ratri nights the cinema companies run an all night show. But orthodox people spurn such customs.

There is a legend, which while it does not give any clue about the origin of the festival, still gives us an idea as to how

Shiva Ratri must be observed. According to this legend there was a wicked man who by profession was a hunter. One day in March which happened to be the thirteenth day of the waning moon, he went to a forest to hunt. The whole day he could not get any thing. Wearied and tired, he climbed up a tree and planned to spend the night there because he was afraid of the lions and tigers that infested the place. The tree he thus selected was a wood-apple tree—the famous bel tree sacred to Shiva. That evening he had passed by a forest temple of Shiva and had heard devout prayers being offered by repeating the name "Shiva Shiva". So, when he had climbed up the tree, since he had nothing to do he began to repeat mockingly what he had heard that evening—"Shiva, Shiva". The night was cold and chilly, and he could not get even a wink of sleep. In his restlessness he shook the tree several times and the leaves of this bel tree fell down on a small cylindrical stone that was near-by. That stone really was the symbol or rather the idol of Shiva. The dew on the leaves was profuse enough to bathe the idol with its cold crystal clean water. Involuntary though it was, the hunter had fasted, kept an all night vigil, recited the name of Shiva, offered bel leaves to Shiva, and had bathed the idol in the purest of water. So Shiva was very pleased with him and the cumulative merits of his involuntary acts secured for him an eternal bliss. His past sins were forgiven and he was received in to kailas, the abode of Shiva and his consort Meenakshi. This Shiva Ratri in several Indian languages has come to mean an involuntary all-night vigil.

Tirakalyanam is perhaps the most spectacular as well as popular festival in south India. The word means "Holy Wedding", and it commemorates the wedding of Shiva with the daughter of a human king—Pandyan of Madurai. It is a ten day festival and the feats of the god are dramatically enacted using idols. Each day a particular story in dramatized. Of these the most spectacular are the wooing of the god in the form of a beggar (called Kangalnath) and the staying of the demon. Of course, the climax is on the tenth day. While each day the idols are carried through the main streets of the town on decorated

wooden plat-forms, on the tenth day they are seated on rather artistically carved wooden cars of enormous size drawn by hundreds of men who use stout ropes. Thousands upon thousands of people ofler their services and the crowd is so thick that some times people are accidentally trodden to death. The dating of this festival varies from place to place. It is stated that in Madurai, South India, the Naick King Thirumal changed the date of the festival so that in summer when there is no agricultural responsibilities, people might observe it leisurely. Any how, this year it was observed from the 5th of Vaishak (April-May) for ten days.

Since Shiva married a human wife, all the festivals connected with her become indirectly Shaivaiti festivals. One of the most famous of these is the puja festival held after the South West monsoon. It celebrates the annual home coming of the wife of the God to earth—her maiden home. A fresh image of of the goddess is made every year and with great joy and fervour she is worshipped and on the tenth day she is sent back to her husband's place, by being thrown into a sroned river or tank. Especially in Bengal, one can see this festival in its most popular aspect.

The eldest son of Shiva is calleh Ganesh (or Pillaiar or Vigneshwar or Ganpatti). The fourth day of the light half of the moon (Bhadrapada) of August-September is saored, to him. On this day it is thought inauspicious to see the moon. Devotees worship Ganesh by fasting the whole day and bow down and exercise acts of penance at the time of the moon rising. According to the old story, the moon once saw Ganesh riding rather uncouthly on his rat-steed, and langhed. This upset him so much that he cursed the moon and all those that beheld it. However, laten on, he relented, removed the curse except for this one particular day of the year. If any one sees the moon that day accidentally. he is very much upset and tries to avert the evil, by throwing stones at his neighbour's house. The idea behind this action is, the neighlours would naturally get angry and beat him and the punishment there received would placate the angry god.

Many temples in South India have local festivals. All these temples have different legends, but they have one thing in common, that is, that god Shiva was manifested in that particular place and helps his devotee in a miraculous way.

Vaishnavite Festivals

The Vishnu festivals are connected with his ten incarnations. The fish incarnation (Matsya avatara) is commemorated on the 3rd day of the light half of the moon of Chaitra (March-April). In the Satpatha Brahmana it is stated that the progenitor of the human raee Manu was rescved by a fish to a place of safety. Later on the fish was indentified with Vishnu.

The tortoise incarnation is remembered on the fifteenth of the light half of tne moon of the same month, that is, twelve days later than the fish incarnation festival.

The boar incarnation festival falls on the 3rd day of the light of the moon of August-September. According to the Puranic story, the earth was in danger on account of a great flood and Vishnu averted the danger by becoming a boar and holding the globe on his tusks.

The fourth incarnation is called Narasimha avatara. This festival falls on the fourteenth day of the light half of the moon of May-June. According to the Puranic story. Prahalad, the devotee of Vishnu, was the son of Hiranyakasipu, a demon king. His father tried in vain to disuade him from worshipping Vishnu. But Prahalada continued his prayers and even tried to convince his father that Vishnu was not only existing but that he was also present everywhere. Where upon the demon king challenged his son to prove that Vishnu was present in a certain pillar, when to his horror the pillar burst out and Vishnu appeared in the form of a man-lion. Those who observe this festival fast the previous day and keep a night long vigil after the festival. A golden image of Narasimha is worshipped and very often that image is presented to the priest.

The fifth incarnation is the Vamana avatar or the dwarf incarnation. This festival falls on the twelth day of the light half of the moon of September-October. People observe a fast the previous day, and worship the god at noon. According to the story, Mahabali was a great king who by his penances and yoga acquired great power which he used for selfish purposes. So in order to rescue the world from his clutches Vishnu appeared in the form of a dwarf asking for three feet of land. When that was granted, the suppliant's foot became so large that the whole universe became a part of it. For keeping his promise the proud king had to offer his head and thus was subdued. Some people observe the festival of Divali to commemorate this incarnation.

The third day of the waxing moon of May-June is set apart for the commemcration of the sixth avatar, called Parasuram avatar. The story is told in Mahabharata that the sage, Jamadagni, asked his son, Parasuram, to kill his mother. The obedient son executed the wishes of his father, who was so pleased with his son's filial piety that he restored to life his slain wife and blessed Parasuram with long life and invincibility. Armed with these twin boons, the young man with his famous axe cleared the earth of the Kshatriya caste, thrice seven times.

The ninth day of April-May waxing moon reminds the people of the incarnation of Rama. But Ram is too great a person to be remembered only one day in a year. So there are other festivals, too, like Ram Navami (the ninth day of Ram), and Ram Milap (the meeting of Ram).

Since Ram is worshipped in many places, towns associated with his life are places of pilgrimage during these festivals. The most famous of these are Rameswaram and Dhanushkodi in South India. In Maharashtra, the first nine days of April-May (Vaisakh) are spent in the public reading of selections from the Ramayana. The day of Ramnavami is kept as a fast and a vigil is held on the succeeding night.

The eighth incarnation is the appearance of Vishnu in the form of Krishna. Celebrated on the eighth day of the dark half

of the moon of August-September (Sravana), complete fast is kept the whole of that day and Krishna is worshipped at midnight. In many houses an elaborate presentation of the birth room of Krishna is made, with images of Devaki, (the mother of Krishna), Krishna and Yasoda (his foster mother). Devotees usually take an oil-bath whenever possible before fasting, and after the fast is over, the spirit is dismissed from the idols. If the idols are made of clay, they are thrown into the water Otherwise th y are locked in an almirah for future use.

The ninth incarnation is Buddhavatara. His festival takes place on the tenth of the waxing moon of October-November, commemorating the birth of the founder of Buddhism. Very few observe this festival even though it is noted in calendars. Incidentally, it shows how Hinduism attempts to gather other religions, and put them into a niche of its own as a sub-sect.

The tenth incarnation has not yet taken place. However Hindus look for it and have fixed a day to observe it as a festival (August-September sixth day of waxing moon). It is a Kalki avatara, when the evils of this age will be done away with.

Besides these, the eleventh day of each (waxing as well as waning) moon is sacred to Vishnu. These 'Ekadasi' days are to be strictly observed as fasts, usually followed by an all night vigil. Orthodox people usually are very scrupulous in observing these fasts twenty four days every year.

Hindu religious history, (especially of South India) indicates that there has been serious rivalry between the followers of Shiva, and those of Vishnu. So, the festivals of one sect were looked down upon by the other. However, one can see reconciling trends also at work. In modern days it is the latter tendency that is on the ascendence. The concrete result of this trend is the rise of festivals in which both Shiva and Vishnu are worshipped and given equal honour. Three such festivals are noted here as examples.

(1) **Vaikuntha Chaturdasi**. This festival falls on the fourteenth of the waxing moon of November-December. According to the story, Krishna went to Benares (Varanasi) to worship Visvesara (the god of the universe) and to offer him one thousand lotus flowers. But while he was bathing, Shiva stole one flower. When Krishna (i e. Vishnu's incarnation) saw that there was one flower less, he plucked one of his own eyes and offered it instead. This pleased Shiva so much that he appointed this day a festival for all. So, people go to Benares that day and worship both gods.

(2) **Harihara Yatra**—Hari is the name of Vishnu and Hara of Shiva. At the junction of the rivers Gandaki and Ganges at Sonepur is a temple for this unity of the two gods. It is stated that Ram built this temple on his way to win his bride, Janaki. Many pilgrims assemble here on the full moon of November-December to worship both the gods.

3. **Dattatreya Purnima**—This falls on the full moon of December-January. Vishnu, Shiva and Brahma desiring to test the chastity of Anusuya, the wife of the Rishi Atri, went to her as mendicants. When she was prepared to give alms they imposed conditions contrary to morals. However, such was the power of Anusuya's chastity, that the three gods were turned to three suckling infants. The god's were so pleased with her conduct, that they granted the couple the blessing of three children. Dattatreya, the youngest, represented the other two and in worshippinge him his devotees think that they are worshipping three gods, Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahma.

THE MID-INDIA REGION

Dr. Henry H. Preslar

Note :—This regular feture of the **India Cultures Quarterly** is contributed by one who, with his associates, has been conducting field studies of cultural phenomena in central India. All investigations are pursued through the vernaculars, with focus on religions.

Primitive Religion in the City

This series endeavors to determine to what extent the religions of simple societies are present in an urban setting of mid-India. The three preceding articles examined the prevalence of animism, totemism and taboo within a site containing railroads, newspapers, and sophistication. The same locale has a population of 300,000, seventy percent of whom are illiterate.

Objects Exerting Power

Some simple societies ascribe to certain material objects, the power to control beings events and influences simply by their presence in an otherwise uncertain situation. Various English words indicate such objects, words like charm, amulet, talisman, fetish, about whose definition there is wide disagreement among writers. Definitions which fit the facts observed by my associates and me in mid-India, are as follows :

Charm : (i) an object having both positive and negative, impersonal power

Talisman : an object having only positive impersonal power (able to effect that desired)

Amulet : an object having only negative impersonal power (able to ward off that not desired)

Fetish : an object having personal power by virtue of its having been entered by a spiritual being other than its own anima or soul (the primitive animist assuming that an object has a soul or a spirit of its own).

(i) Some authorities use these terms to indicate verbal utterances (spells, mantras) as well as objects. While admitting the propriety of this, we confine our attention here to objects.

By impersonal power I mean a power which in itself is devoid of personality. A Westerner thinks that electric power and steam power are just power, and not powerful persons. An anthropologist may call the impersonal power of a talisman, by such a term as **mana**. By personal power I mean a person who is powerful, in this case, a supernatural being, demon, spirit believed to be inhabiting the object.

Thus, my definitions view these interesting objects within two frames of reference : first, as to whether they have positive or negative power, or both; second, as to whether their power is impersonal or personal. The common people of mid-India (and thruout India also) believe in such objects and from both standpoints.

In order to understand them in reference to the city, it is necessary to look at these objects from a third standpoint, namely, as to whether they are natural or artificial. A natural talisman would be, for example, a small stone which has not been altered in any way by human intervention. An artificial talisman would be a metal locket suspended by a string around the neck, and which contains a piece of paper on which is written a powerful verse. There may be another class, partly natural and partly artificial, like vermillion powder which is reddish due to certain inherent properties, but which has been purified and pulverized by manufacturing processes. The reason for looking at these objects from this third standpoint is its relevance to our focus on the city. The jungle is the home of the natural, and the city of the artificial. If the core of the matter is the **idea** of objects exerting power, in the jungle this idea may be expressed through natural objects, and in the city through artificial objects. The belief may be rather much the same, or in the city the belifef might be altered by the urban process; perhaps, there are certain areas in the city in which the **idea** of an object exerting power is stronger than in the jungle.

Illustrations

In order to fix these definitions in the mind, some examples may be given.

A Charm

"My grandfather was a great wonder-worker. He used to wear this **tawiz** (charm); there was great power in it. He was a pure man, so he could wear it. Nobody could bear this charm except him, and he got great benefit from it I also tried to wear this tawiz but the next day I fell ill. so I removed it. This requires a pure man. It requires ritual cleanliness; it requires a person who knows mantras." 2072B

The foregoing charm has both positive and negative personal power, depending on the "purity" of the wearer, and in this case "purity" means celibacy. "My grandfather married at the age of thirty-four, and then the wonder-working ability left him." While living a celibate life, the tawiz gave positive power, otherwise, it hindered negatively.
Some charms in mid-India are believed to exert both positive or negative power irrespective of the ceremonial purity of the wearer.

A Talisman

In the wall of a Kol's house a nail had been driven, from which hung suspended by a black thread, a coconut, a necklace, and three black bangles. The Kol said : "This nail ties down Kali from Chaitra to Chaitra (from the month by that name to the next, a period of one full year) When the time runs out we have to tie a new talisman (an object having only positive impersonal power) to the nail. By this talisman, Kali is caused to protect us from troublesome ancestral spirits." 1608

An Amulet

The informant said, "This amulet (an object having only negative impersonal power, able to ward off the undesirable) protects me from misfortune while on a pilgrimage". The object was a bracelet worn on the wrist. 887

The following illustration brings out the fact that an amulet need not be worn, but can be exhibited.

Another Amulet

" When there is a good crop in the garden" said the Kachhi, " some people whose eyes are evil want to look at it from the road on the borders. A raw crop is spoiled by an evil glance. So in order to ward off the evil glances, I have hung these pots **(handi)** on those yard-long, upturned sticks. Now when anyone looks toward my truck garden his first glance falls on the pot, and any evil eye or evil glance cannot spoil the crop. The pot is broken instead; a cracked pot means a glance from an evil eye. You see I had a good stand of **loki** (a kind of pumpkin), but when an evil eye turned on the plants, all the fruit withered." 2307.

Still Another Amulet

The informent has suspended a clay pitcher on top of a bamboo stick whose lower end is stuck in his cabbage bed. He says that no priest (**pujari**), no ecstatic **(ojha)** and no servant of any kind is required for this pitcher or its installation. Neither does the pitcher have any connection with magic. In brief, the pitcher has negative, impersonal power in and of itself. This remarkable pitcher or talisman, is called a **dithota,** and no ritual is necessary for it. The dithota is the repository of blind, impersonal negative and self-existing power. There is no festival **(tewahar)** to celebrate it; the dithota just **is**. The informent said that every man has some magnetic power, and exerts an influence on any thing he beholds. When people see that of which they are envious or jealous, they exert an evil influence over that thing. for example, a good women, a young lad, a beautiful building, a tree laden with fruits or anything which is good and beautiful. The growth of trees, fruits and vegetables is uncertain at best, and many diseases may infect them, especially if the target of an evil glance. A dithota is strange and ugly and catches the shaft of an evil eye first and drains it off, and thus the vegetables are saved. 2341

The foregoing illustrations of objects possessing impersonal positive power (the talisman), negative impersonal power (the amulet), or both (the charm), may have made the definitions clear. We are now ready for an illustration of a fetish (an object

having personal power by virtue of its being possessed by a spiritual being other than its own **anima**.)

A Fetish

We saw earthen vessels hanging on poles at different places in Premalal's garden and he explained that these were placed to remove ill omens. We asked him if he really believed that these would safeguard his garden. He said that these vessels of themselves have no power to preserve the produce, but rather that they are the locations of two supernatural beings named A– and M–, whom he worships. These beings are not honored by any shrine or temple, but they are there at these vessels only. He breaks a coconut and takes their names to please them 2307

This illustration place us on our guard when identifying objects as charms, talismans, amulets or fetishes. They may look more or less the same (clay vessels or pitchers on upturned sticks in a field), but their exact classification depends upon a concept in the mind of the informant, and not in our minds. Nothing could be more careless than to categorize such objects without first sharing the thought of him who uses them. An object is to be defined as a charm, talisman, amulet or fetish by the user thereof and not by the observer.

There now remain for illustrative clarification, the differences between natural and artificial objects believed to exert power. A natural object would be any such object found in a state of nature. It might be part of the human body, as the following illustration shows.

A Natural Fetish

We had a discussion on the question, Why are mujavirs (mediums in the Cult of the Dead) not burned when they walk on fire? The informant maintained as follows: The mujavir, when possessed by the spirit of the **pir** (departed saint), has a power in his feet, which power makes the fire cold So cold is the effect of the mujavir's feet that those accompanying him

can also walk through the fire, and, in fact any-body in the audience could do so if he dared But this power in his feet cannot be obtained in a condition of impurity. The story of the Gardha mujavir illustrates this : It seems that in 1952 a festival of the X—religion and another of the Y—religion fell on the same date. This mujavir was of the X—religion, and he began the day by doing puja to his goddess. Thereafter, he crossed over to the Y—religion with its Cult of the Dead, and came to the saint's grave expecting to experience ecstacy, as in former years. He seemed to go under trance, and his guides led him into the fire barefoot. The result was that his feet were terribly burned; there was no power in his feet to cool the fire, because he was ceremonially unclean due to visiting the X—religion goddess. He was taken to the local hospital and remained there for forty days, healing his burns. Upon coming out, and realizing his uncleanness, he repented and begged forgiveness of the dead saint. Then to justify his claim to be a mujavir, he gave public notice of a test. A special fire was built, and he went under ecstacy, and this time the saint of the Y—religion entered into him and possessed his feet also. His feet made the fire cold, and before the eyes of all, he was not burned after walking on live coals. 1941.

Further illustrations will occur in the classification below. I now offer an example of an artificial talisman (an object with impersonal, positive power).

An Artificial Talismau

A Nai (barber caste) told me that recently he needed a talisman for a particular purpose, namely, one that would break the absence and silence of his brother who had gone away without writing a single letter. The Nai applied to a **gunia** (tribal occult functionary), saying, "I want a talisman that will enable me to contact my brother so as to know where he is and what is the matter." The gunia answered, "About five days will be required to make such, and, moreover, I could make a half a dozen at the same time; the price may be reduced to you for one if you can get orders for five more. The normal price is ten rupees." The Nai

tried but it seemed that nobody of his acquaintance was confronted with an absent, silent brother, and the gunia finally made a concession of five rupees.

The gunia then went into the jungle and stayed there working on the talisman for four or five days. What he produced is a metal cylinder about one and a quarter inches long, and a quarter of an inch in diameter. This is attached to a black cord for wearing on the arm. The gunia instructed him how to use it, namely, to burn **udbutti** (incense) and to pass the talisman through its fragrant smoke, and then to place it under his ear after lying down to sleep. Both these acts were to be done before retiring at night to his cot. The informant did so, and that very same night, his brother appeared to him in a dream and gave full information about his whereabouts and situation. 4555.

By this time the reader must be fully aware of the 'ideal types' of objects supposed to exert power, namely, charms (objects with both positive and negative impersonal power), talismans (objects with positive impersonal power), amulets (objects with negative impersonal power), fetishes (objects with power by virtue of indwelling spirits other than their own); and, he should endeavor to recall that such may be natutal (as in the case of the mujavir's feet), or artificial (as with the dream-producing metal cylinder).

(to be continued)

Tirukural *(dated about 400 A. D.)*

A New Translation.

Chapter LV.

Righteous Rule

1. The correct method is to investigate impartially and decide after consulting experts-
2. The whole world lives expecting the clouds (to rain). The whoie nation lives expecting the king to rule righteously.
3. The righteous sceptre is the support of the priests and of the ethical precepts their vedas proclaim.
4. People lovingly kiss the feet of the king who rules them with loving protection.
5. Rain and grain produces increase in the land wherein the king rules righteously.
6. It is not the spear that gives a king victory in battle —rather it is his unerringly righteous secptre.
7. Thc king guards the world and impartial justice guards him.
8. The king who does not hear complaints nor follow the correct legal procedure will of his own accord perish.
9. Lovingly protecting people and punishing criminals are not a king's blemishes. They are his duties.
10. The king gets rid of the weeds of society by executing criminals just as the farmer gets rid of the weeds of his green fields.

Chapter LVI

Unrighteous Rule

1. The unscrupulous behaviour of a greedy king is worse than that of a murderer.
2. A robber's threatening at the point of a sword, and a king's unjust exactions are alike.

3. Day by day will decline the land of the king who does not administer justice diligently day by day.

4. The king who has neither forethought nor just administration loses his riches and subjects.

5. The army to destory the wealth (of the unjust) is nothing but the tears of the oppressed who have no redress.

6. The glory of a king is his righteous sceptre; without it he has no other glory.

7. A land without rain and a king without kindness are alike.

8. Those who have (wealth) suffer more than those who have not in the reign of an unjust king.

9. If the king swerves from justice, it will not rain in time; nay—there will not be rain at all.

10. If the guard (king) does not guard, cows will not yield milk and the priests (men of six duties) will forget their scriptures.

Note : The six duties of the priest are :—

1. to recite the scriptures. 2. to teach (worthy people) how to recite the scriptures. 3. to perform sacrifices. 4. to cause sacrifices to be performed. 5. to give. 6. to receive (i. e. by begging).

Chapter LVII.
Abstaining from Cruelty

1. He is (the ideal) king who awards suitable punishment (to criminals) in order to prevent repetition.

2. The king who wants his wealth to last long, should appear to be harsh but give just (but lenient) punishment (in the end.)

3. The unjust and cruel king surely and quickly goes to ruin.

4. Short lived is he who gets for himself the bad name,'Cruel king'.

5 Demon possessed is the wealth of the stern-faced (king) who does not grant audience easily.

6. The abundant riches of the king whose words are harsh and whose eyes are graceless, will come to nought.

7. Harsh words and excessive punishment constitute the saw that saws away the strength of kings in their battles.

8. The king who rules without consulting his ministers, but gets angry with them (when things go wrong) will lose his wealth. (i. e. all his possessions).

9. The king who does not take precautions in times of war, will perish with fright.

Chapter LVIII

Graciousness *(Being Compassionate)*

1 Graciousness is the supreme ornament. (of Kings) by which the world in maintained.

2. Countries prosper through the graciousness of kings. Burden to the land are the kings devoid of graciousness.

3. What is the use of a song, if it cannot be sung ? What is the use of an eye, if it has no graciousness ?

4. Eyes devoid of graciousness have only face value.

5. Graciousness is the ornament of the eyes. Without it, they will be two sores in the face.

6. Men having eyes without compassion are like trees springing up from the earth.

N. B. In Tamil, the sprouting spots of trees are called eyes. So the comparison is between trees that have eyes and men that have the same.

7. Those who have no compassion have no eyes; for those who really have eyes are compassionate.

8. The whole world is his who is compassionate and at the same time, his kindly feelings do not interfere with his business efficiency.

9. The crown of virtues is patiently showing kindness to those that harm (us.)

10. Those who desire the culture desired by all, are even willing to drink the poison poured out in their presence.

Chapter L IX.
Employing Spies

1. The system of spying and the code of ethics are said to be he two eyes of a king.
2. It is the duty of the king to know all that happens to all persons at all times.
3. The king who does not know the value of a spy has no means of conquests.
4. It is the duty of the spy to observe carefully, the servants, relations and enemies of the king.
5. The spy must be able to assume an appearance that creates no suspicion, have the courage to meet tense situations, and come away without exposing secrets.
6. Assuming the form of an ascetic, the spy must investigate and under no circumstances should he divulge his secrets.
7. The spy should be able to unravel what is obscure. He should have no doubts about the relevant facts.
8. The king should verify the findings of one spy by another spy.
9. The verdict of three spies, working unawares of one another must be accepted.
10. Let not the spy be publicly honoured. Other wise. his secrets will be exposed.

Chapter LX.
Fervency of Spirit

1. Those that have fervency of spirit have (every thing). Those that have no fervency to they possess any thing ?
2. Self possession in real property. If this is lost all property is lost.
3. Those who have fervency of spirit will not say, "I have lost wealth".

4. Wealth will request for an entrey into the life of the man who has an un alteraqle fervenry of spirit.

5. Water-weeds rise as high as the water in which they grow. A man is as great as his mind

6. Let one's thoughts be great. Even if he is removed (by Circumstances) from his high position let his thoughts he great.

7. The arrow-struck elephant will go on fighting. Likewise the strong-hearted will not faint.

8. The weak-hearted cannot have the joy of self-respect.

9. The elephant has a large body and sharp are its tusks. Yet, it is afraid of tiger's attacks.

10. Strength of mind is ones wealth. Those who do not have it can be counted only as trees.

Book Review

Harisatya Bhattacharya, Anekantavada

(Bhavanagar : Jaina Atmanand Sabha)

P P 208

Anekantavade means the doctrine of pluralism. However, this book does not deal with the metaphysical aspects of pluralism in general; rather it is an essay on Jaina epistemology. In Jainism, as in other Indian systems, epistemology, metaphysies, ethics, and religion go together. In other words religion and ethics are based in the systems of Indian philosophy on epistemology and ethics.

The author is a sincere and zealous Jain as is evinced from his quotation of the proclamation by Karikala Sarvagnga Shri Hemichandra Surishivanaji; —"To all who argue on the other side, I proclaim with thunder that there is no god-hood superior to Vitaragatva, and there is no philosophy superior to the Anekantavada".

Because of this strong conviction, he examines critically (as did the Indian students of olden days) every type of thought prevalent in India, and asserts that he has proved the superiority of Jaina epistemology over all others.

The author is quite at home in European and Greek philosophy as well. This is a great help to western readers, because, in almost every possible instance he tries to seek parallels from the thoughts of Western philosophers. Thus he refers to Plato, Aristotle, Leibinitz, Spinoza, Locke, Berkley, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Schoperhaeur, Fichte, Bergson, Alexander, William James etc.

One of the pleasing features of this book is the number of illustrations taken from the world of political events after the independence of India (1947). The author cautions the reader not to take these examples as absolutely unchallengeable but affirms that they are given just to indicate the manner in which one is to proceed in the matter of appraising evidences.

In this book one can find a clean exposition of Syadvada a doctrine which enfolds within its fold every **possible** theory. The under-lying idea of this doctrine in that the innate nature of an object has infinite facets, and viewed from different angles every object reveals itself differently. So in order to get a true picture of that object it must be viewed from a number of stand points and even contradictory conclusions should be accepted if different view-points force us to do so. That is, since our knowledge is related to our view-point, and reality has an infinite number of facets, consistency should not be our aim. Rather we should try to get as many view points as possible.

The anthor is a very enthusiastic advocate of Jaina epistemology, and prescribes it as a panacea for all evils. He thinks that wars could be averted and peace firmly established if politicians would take seriously this Syadvada. This doctrine has seven predications and each one of them is allotted a full chapter in this book.

This book will serve as a good introduction to the study of Jaina philosophy and religion as it takes pains to show how Jainism differs in its philosophical and religious outlook from Buddhism and the Vedant. It also offers a good example of that tenet, "No one should spur any religion because every religion has a fragment of truth, but mine is better because it includes the partial truths of all other religions".

The printing and whole set up of this small volume is commendable, but a number of printer's errors have crept in.

The Problem of Life in Buddhism

A. P. Salve B. A.

As soon as a man is born he has to face many problems. In childhood his parents help him to solve them. But when he grows older he has to deal with them himself. This was true of Buddha also. His parents tried to protect Buddha from ordinary needs. Ordinary problems can be solved in an ordinary way. But Buddha's problems were extraordinary, because he had a longing which could not be satisfied by mere sensual pleasures. In the mind of Buddha there had grown up a horror of life, not only of life as he knew it, but life under every conceivable condition. The thought that he himself, and those from whom he learned must inevitably grow old and die was intolerable to him. He feared the possibility of becoming the victim of wasting sickness and diseases. Life beyond the grave held out no hope for him, because there was no possibility of attaining the desired goal of life. It was the same gloomy picture of re-birth, old-age, sickness, death, and even recurring rebirth and death. Surely life was a great evil before Buddha, because he was not able to see a clear picture of the future. As he thought about this picture, he could see no release from re-birth. He had seen in the yellow robe genuine peace and satisfaction. Perhaps such a way could give him release from the cycle of rebirths.

So he resolved to become an ascetic, and to go forth into homelessness. This idea was already in his mind, and the birth of a son was the occasion to leave the kingdom. Every one was rejoicing in the advent of the heir to the throne. But the father said, "this is a new and strong tie which I shall have to break". He felt that if he did not escape quickly, the tiny hands of his little son would hold him so firmly that he would never he able to break away. When the beantiful princess of Gotama exclaimed

from her window, "Happy, happy the mother, happy the wife of such a son and husband !", Gotama asked, "But where comes the repose that brings happiness to the heart ?".

What did he mean by 'happiness' ? To him it had a great religious significance. It meant freedom from transmigration. Gotama used it in this sense as to the birth of Rahula.

The most beautiful dancers were called to divert his attention to worldly things. But while they were dancing he slept. To him the place was like a burial ground, where lay difigured corpses, or a house full of flames His mind was centred in one and only one idea-release from births. He took the birth of his son as a great tie, binding him in bondage of suffering and pain. It disquieted him so much that he crept quietly to his wife's chamber to bid good bye to the family. But he dared not risk awaking his wife. So, he had to be content with a look, and went. We are glad to have this glimpse of the real human nature of Gotama. "It is like a ray of sunlight in a dark cave".

His Reaction Towards Life.

The first thing he did after leaving home was to remove his jewels and return them home through his faithful servent. Then he cut off his hair and exchanged his clothes with those of a beggar. He became a mendicant at the age of twentynine. Buddha's leaving home was not unique. Even now many young men and women forsake home. But most of them leave the world because they feel frustrated in their ambitions or love. Not so in the case of Buddha and many of his followers. They came from princely homes and had been enjoying the pleasures of the world. If they left the world it was just because the world had no charm for them. When Buddha came out, he realized that he himself had been in a house of flames. In fact Gotama did not begin his career as a saviour of the world. He sought his own salvation. However, after he attained happiness, his mind turned back to his suffering fellow men.

Now as to the second attitude to life, he went to Rajagaha, the capital of Magha, begging through the streets of that beloved city, like any other ordinary beggar.

Buddha experienced that there was no solution for the problem of begging. In begging from door to door he followed the great teachers of his time. Alora and Uddaka But they could not give him the special knowledge he sought. So he left them to follow his own sorrowful way, the way of self torture. He withdrew himself into a jungle of Uruvela. With five other asceties he underwent incredible bodily and mental sufferings. Buddha outdid his friends in these tortures and they recognized him as their chief, At the end of six years he realized that this period of torture went in vain and that the desired goal was not reached thereby.

Solution to the Problem.

His greatest ambition was to get a solution to his problem. He was wearied and disturbed. His friends had left him. He sat under a Bo-tree and took stock of his life saying, "I have left all that men hold dear in order to attain this knowledge, and I have suffered all that man can suffer, and yet, I seem to be no nearer the goal of my desire. Would it not he easier for me to give up this fruitless search and to return to my people where I am sure of a great welcome ?" The temptation was very strong, but he resisted it and determined to continue his search for release even though death should take him on the way. He arrived at the conclusion that he could never get his desired end by fasting, or torturing, or by devoting himself to the feet of teachers. He determined not to torture himself any more and started taking sufficient food to keep his body in good health, and decided to sit under the Bo tree up to the time he may get salvation from sorrow and death. At last, after a great trial, the great light came to Buddha while he was meditating. It was a knowledge of universal cause and effect. At the back of phenomenal existence there is no personal, inteligent, creator and

ruler of the universe but only impersonal law—"The law of becoming and passing away". As Buddha says. "The wheel of the becoming is without a known beginning, lacking a maker such as Brahma for such consequent proceeds by reason of its antecedent". In short, it was neither substance, nor spirit, neither understanding reality in matter neither god, nor soul, at the back of the mind, but only the law of becoming and passing away. The law of impermanence inevitably involves evil and sorrow.

In fact, this discovery brought great satisfaction to Gotama because he thought it was an escape from sorrow and the cycle of rebirth. For it is evident that if there is no soul to be reborn, rebirth can he brought to an end. The thought "this is my last life, I shall never more be re-born, was ineffable bliss to him.

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Printed by :Dr R. D. Immanueal, at Edward Printing Press, Cantt., Jabalpur.